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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Identical letters dated 12 February 2013 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I regret to once again have to draw your attention to the critical and tense situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem — the territory that constitutes the State of Palestine — as a result of Israel's relentless provocations and illegal actions against the Palestinian people. The systematic human rights violations and breaches of humanitarian law, particularly the theft and colonization of the Palestinian land and the displacement of the Palestinian civilian population, which are being perpetrated by the occupying Power, are undermining the fragile situation on the ground and undermining the hopes for renewed peace efforts.

In follow-up to my previous letters, I must once again convey our grave concern regarding the plight of Palestinian prisoners and detainees being held captive by Israel, the occupying Power, particularly the plight of several prisoners who are on long-term hunger strikes in protest of their unlawful detention. I have raised this serious matter directly in my recent letters dated 24 January 2013 (A/ES-10/579-S/2013/52) and 8 February 2013 (A/ES-10/580-S/2013/84), and President Mahmoud Abbas has emphasized the gravity of this issue in a letter to you dated today, 12 February 2013. We appeal to the United Nations to exert the necessary efforts and to use the good offices of this organization to compel the occupying Power to act humanely towards the hunger striking prisoners and to release them and all other Palestinians being unlawfully and arbitrarily detained.

In this regard, we once again draw the attention of the international community to the critical conditions of the following prisoners, whose lives are in imminent danger owing to the hunger strikes they have undertaken in peaceful, non-violent protest of their captivity and to the callous disregard of the occupying Power of their rights and their lives: Samer Issawi, who has been on hunger strike for 204 days and faces death if there is no intervention to save his life; Ayman Sharawna, who has been on hunger strike for 140 days; Tareq Qedan, who has also been on hunger

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strike for 78 days; and Jafar Ezzedine, who has also been on hunger strike for 78 days. We appeal for action to save the lives of these men and to compel Israel to cease its practice of arbitrary detention and imprisonment of Palestinian civilians, including children, and its egregious physical and psychological mistreatment of the thousands of Palestinians in its captivity.

I am also compelled to draw your attention once again to Israel's illegal settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The occupying Power continues its land grab and its efforts to clear the Palestinian land of its indigenous inhabitants as it continues to feverishly pursue this illegal expansionist agenda. On Sunday, 10 February, the Israeli Government granted approval for the construction of 90 more units in the illegal settlement of "Beit El", adjacent to the Palestinian cities of Ramallah and Al-Bireh, setting the way for construction to begin as early as tomorrow. It is to be recalled that the plans for these units are part of the "deal" of the Prime Minister of Israel for the evacuation of the "Ulpana" settlement, which was also constructed illegally on confiscated Palestinian land deep in the West Bank. Thus, the Government of Israel continues to demonstrate its total rejection of international law, particularly the fourth Geneva Convention, its lack of commitment to the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and, in fact, its intention to destroy that solution.

The recent period has also witnessed aggressive and destructive actions by the occupying Power in the al-Khalil (Hebron) area, both in the city of al-Khalil and the surrounding southern hills. On 9 February, Palestinian activists, supported by several international activists, set up another protest village, "Kanaan Village", in the southern hill area of al-Khalil, near the village of al-Tuwani, in peaceful protest against Israel's illegal plans and ongoing attempts to demolish homes and infrastructure in the area and to forcibly remove the Palestinian inhabitants. In this regard, Israel has declared the area a so-called "closed military zone", and yet is allowing Israeli settlers to remain there, and is pushing forward with plans to destroy eight Palestinian villages to make way for the establishment of an army training ground. Regrettably, the Israeli occupying forces descended with force upon the Kanaan Village demonstrators, beating them, destroying the tents that had been set up in protest and detaining several of the protesters and three journalists.

Also in this regard, on 9 February, the Israeli occupying army forcibly prevented 150 farmers from reaching their land in Susiya in the southern hill area, further imperilling their livelihoods and violating their rights. It is important to recall here that the Palestinian residents of the area are currently, with the support, among others, of Rabbis for Human Rights, petitioning the Israeli court against the demolition of their homes and gaining access to their farmlands, which are near an Israeli settlement that was illegally constructed there on confiscated Palestinian land.

This was followed on Sunday, 10 February, by the vandalization of a Palestinian community centre in the heart of al-Khalil by a group of extremist Israeli settlers. The settlers uprooted trees and caused damage to the centre as part of an ongoing campaign of intimidation and terror being perpetrated daily by the approximately 800 settlers illegally transferred to the city against the more than 180,000 Palestinian civilians there.

Also in the al-Khalil area, the Israeli occupying forces carried out more demolitions on 11 February. Several structures, including a home, shed and water

well, were destroyed in Beit Awwa village, leaving eight members of a Palestinian family homeless. Civilian protests against the demolition were met by force by the occupying army, causing injury to several people. On the same day, the Israeli occupying forces demolished a residential trailer in the town of Idhna, displacing eight members of another Palestinian family, and also razed parts of the surrounding land on which the family raises produce for their livelihood.

All of these Israeli policies and measures constitute grave contraventions of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, with some amounting to war crimes. The international community cannot continue absolving Israel, the occupying Power, of its responsibility for these violations and of its obligations to respect international law. Efforts must be exerted, including by the United Nations Security Council, to bring a halt to these violations, to stem the deterioration of the situation on the ground and to preserve and seize forthwith the dwindling opportunity that remains to achieve the two-State solution for peace.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 453 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 8 February 2013 (A/ES-10/580-S/2013/84), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations